United Nations A/ES-10/751–S/2017/376

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
1 May 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 28 April 2017 from the Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Regrettably, conditions in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, continue to deteriorate and tensions continue to rise, as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with its illegal practices, in breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, causing hardships and suffering to the Palestinian civilian population and undermining the contiguity and viability of the Palestinian territory.

Yet another provocative announcement was made this week by the Israeli Housing Ministry regarding plans for the illegal construction of more Israeli settlements on our land. This includes the decision by the so-called "Jerusalem Municipality" to advance a plan to build approximately 10,000 settlement units on land belonging to the Palestinian village of Qalandiya. Further plans reported include the expropriation of more Palestinian land in Ra's al-Amud in Occupied East Jerusalem to build a so-called information and visitor centre to serve the Jewish cemetery adjacent to Al-Aqsa mosque compound; a plan to expand the "Shilo" settlement to accommodate settlers evacuated from the "Amona" settlement that was built on private Palestinian land; and the establishment of a new settlement installation near the "Adam" settlement north-east of East Jerusalem.

Such announcements and the actual advancement of these plans are being made in grave breach of international law, in direct violation of relevant United Nations resolutions, and in deliberate contempt of the international community. Israel's disrespect for the Security Council in particular is glaring, especially in the wake of the unanimous adoption by the Council of resolution 2334 (2016), which, inter alia, unequivocally called for the immediate and complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and for respect by Israel of its legal obligations.

As Israel blatantly dismisses and defies the Security Council and its authoritative decisions, preferring instead to persist with its systematic settlement

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colonization schemes, it is damaging the Council's credibility and making a mockery of the rule of law and international norms. Such illegal actions also further obstruct and undermine the prospects for a peaceful and just solution in accordance with the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines, also as called for in resolution 2334 (2016) and as reflected in the long-standing international consensus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a consensus that was again clearly reaffirmed in the Council debate of 20 April 2017 on this matter. Moreover, such actions totally fly in the face of efforts by concerned regional and international partners to revive a political horizon for peace negotiations to achieve that solution.

Israel must be held accountable for its violations before it completely sabotages the chances for peace and stability. The Security Council in particular has a duty to insist on and pursue the implementation of its own resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and to demand compliance with its provisions without exception. The Palestinian Government has committed itself to respecting resolution 2334 (2016) and will continue to cooperate for the achievement of the resolution's ultimate objectives of promoting an end to the occupation and realizing a just, lasting and comprehensive solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. If Israel, the occupying Power, persists with such actions, flouting the law and destroying the two-State solution, it must be the party held responsible for the failure of this globally endorsed vision for peace and its consequences.

Today, we must also highlight, once again, the critical issue of the 1,600 Palestinian prisoners who have been on hunger strike since 17 April 2017 in protest of the inhumane measures they are being subjected to in Israeli captivity, in violation of their basic rights and dignity. Through this peaceful, non-violent hunger strike — the "Freedom and Dignity" strike, now in its twelfth day — they seek to call attention to the plight of Palestinian prisoners and detainees and to have their appeals heard for more humane treatment, in line with international humanitarian and human rights law. But their peaceful appeals have been met with a typical punitive response by Israel, which is determined to crush any expression of rejection of the occupation and its illegal practices. Although many of the striking prisoners are now suffering declining health and illness, rather than address their requests, Israel has decided to intensify its ill-treatment of the hunger strikers, including by means of solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, separation and withdrawal of the salt the prisoners had been taking with water since the strike began. Incitement against the prisoners by Israeli leaders has also been rampant, with one Israeli minister declaring that the Government should be firm, "even if it means letting prisoners die".

As the situation worsens, tensions are rising in communities all across Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Protests have been held in Palestinian cities and towns in solidarity with the hunger strikers and all Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including by children, women, men and elected officials. Public sympathy with their plight is strong, as are the calls for an end to the suffering and injustice they and their families are enduring. Regrettably, however, Israeli occupying forces, disregarding the high sensitivities on the matter, which has affected nearly every Palestinian family under occupation, have confronted protesters with excessive force, with over 50 protesters injured as a result of tear gas inhalation and some shot with live or rubber bullets. We appeal to the international community to support the prisoners' hunger strike and to insist on Israel's respect for international law, specifically article 76 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which defines the rights of protected persons faced with detention by an occupying Power.

We renew our call today for the international community's urgent attention to the ongoing critical situation in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Clear demands must be made for Israel, the occupying Power, to respect its obligations under international law and comply with United Nations resolutions, or face accountability. The future prospects for Palestinian-Israeli peace and security, as well as regional peace, are dependent upon this.

This letter is in follow-up to our 609 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 13 April 2017 (A/ES-10/749-S/2017/325), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Charge d'affaires a.i.